

First Chimurenga, 1896–1897

SCHOOL-BASED PROJECT · ABANTU ARCHIVES INTEGRATION · 10 CURATED SOURCES

SBP problem statement: *How can we map and visualise the leadership structures — spiritual, military and colonial — that shaped the First Chimurenga resistance and its aftermath?*

Note on spiritual leadership content: *This pack references Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi, Mlimo and spirit mediums as documented historical facts, matching ZIMSEC syllabus standards. It excludes ritual or devotional content. Teachers taking students to a local historic shrine must treat the visit as an educational heritage tour, setting protocols with local custodians beforehand.*

1. Curriculum overview & learning objectives

Syllabus alignment: ZIMSEC Heritage Studies (Forms 1–4): Sovereignty & Governance. Built for local students and diaspora scholars.

Core learning outcomes:

- Map how spirit mediums — among the Shona and the Ndebele — worked alongside military chiefs during the 1896–97 uprising.
- Evaluate how geography, caves and hills shaped resistance tactics.
- Compare broad national histories, colonial ethnography and regional/mission accounts against one another.

2. Differentiated resource tracks

Track	Core materials / access & execution
Local (rural / low-bandwidth)	Printed PDF pack, poster paper, pens, newspaper clippings. Teacher-led educational visits to local historic sites or battlegrounds.
Diaspora (digital / global)	GIS mapping software (Google Earth), digital whiteboards. Access the Abantu Archives digital repository, map archives, and online texts.

3. Curated primary & secondary sources

Four sources marked ★ **NEW** were added in this revision to bring in a settler eyewitness account, the Ndebele side of the uprising, colonial ethnographic framing, and later institutional memory-making.

Source 1: Origins of Rhodesia (1968)

ACCESSION: AA-WEB-0054 | TYPE: Post-independence synthesis | AUTHOR: Stanlake Samkange

A historical account by a pioneering Zimbabwean historian, analysing the events of 1896–97.

Samkange, Stanlake. 1968. *Origins of Rhodesia*. Abantu Archives, accession AA-WEB-0054.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Find the names of Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi in Samkange's text.

CRITICAL QUESTION

How does Samkange describe the relationship between spiritual leaders and military chiefs?

Source 2: Personal Record of Some Incidents in the Life of Cecil Rhodes (1970) ★ NEW

ACCESSION: AA-BK-0261 | TYPE: Settler eyewitness memoir | AUTHOR: Vere Palgrave Stent

Stent was Reuter Correspondent with Colonel Plumer's Matabeleland Relief Force in 1896, witnessed the fighting at Thaba S'Amamba in the Matopos, and personally accompanied Rhodes to the Great Indaba — a rare direct settler-eyewitness account of the peace negotiations, to be read against Samkange's later synthesis (Source 1).

Stent, Vere Palgrave. 1970 [1925]. *Personal Record of Some Incidents in the Life of Cecil Rhodes*. Books of Rhodesia Publishing Co. (Pvt.) Ltd., Bulawayo. Abantu Archives, accession AA-BK-0261.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Identify one detail Stent records about the Great Indaba that a later historian could not have witnessed directly.

CRITICAL QUESTION

What does it mean that our most detailed eyewitness account of the peace talks comes from a Rhodes loyalist? How should that shape how we read it?

Source 3: Map of the Zimbabwe Ruins (1960)

ACCESSION: AA-WEB-0032 | TYPE: Reference map | PUBLISHER: National Museums & Monuments of Rhodesia

A map showing strategic sites across Zimbabwe, helping students trace movement during the uprising.

National Museums and Monuments of Rhodesia. 1960. *Map of the Zimbabwe Ruins*. Abantu Archives, accession AA-WEB-0032.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Mark the main rebellion hotspots on your outline map.

CRITICAL QUESTION

How did geography and natural terrain influence the tactics used by resistance fighters?

Source 4: African Nationalism (1959)

ACCESSION: AA-WEB-0046 | TYPE: Nationalist text | AUTHOR: Ndabaningi Sithole

A foundational text of Zimbabwean nationalist thought, viewing 1896–97 in long-term perspective.

Sithole, Ndabaningi. 1959. *African Nationalism*. Oxford University Press. Abantu Archives, accession AA-WEB-0046.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Summarise Sithole's view on how colonial rule disrupted indigenous political structures.

CRITICAL QUESTION

Why were the leaders of the First Chimurenga used as symbols of later nationalist movements?

Source 5: Mlimo: The Rise and Fall of the Matabele (1972) ★ NEW

ACCESSION: AA-WEB-0081 | TYPE: Ndebele history | AUTHOR: A. A. Campbell ('Mziki')

Covers the 1896 Second Matabele War through the figure of Mlimo, the Ndebele spiritual-political leader — fills a real gap in this pack, which otherwise centres Shona spiritual leadership (Nehanda, Kaguvi) almost exclusively.

Campbell, A. A. ('Mziki'). 1972 [1926]. *Mlimo: The Rise and Fall of the Matabele*. Books of Rhodesia Bulawayo Co. (Pvt.) Ltd, Bulawayo. Abantu Archives, accession AA-WEB-0081.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Identify Mlimo's role in coordinating Ndebele resistance.

CRITICAL QUESTION

How does the religious/spiritual dimension of Ndebele leadership compare with what Source 1 describes for the Shona uprising?

Source 6: Revolt in Southern Africa 1896–7 (1967)

ACCESSION: AA-BK-0208 | TYPE: Academic history | AUTHOR: T. O. Ranger

The standard academic history of the uprising, examining how fighters coordinated across regions.

Ranger, T. O. 1967. *Revolt in Southern Africa 1896-7: A Study in African Resistance*. Heinemann. Abantu Archives, accession AA-BK-0208.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Identify how Ranger describes coordination between regional resistance groups.

CRITICAL QUESTION

How does Ranger's academic study compare with Samkange's narrative account in Source 1?

Source 7: The Mashona: The Indigenous Natives of S. Rhodesia (1927) ★ NEW

ACCESSION: AA-WEB-0048 | TYPE: Colonial ethnography | AUTHOR: Charles Bullock, Native Commissioner and Examiner in Native Customs and Administration

Written just 31 years after the uprising by a serving Native Commissioner — valuable precisely because of its official colonial authorship, letting students interrogate the categories used by Native Administration.

Bullock, Charles. 1927. *The Mashona: The Indigenous Natives of S. Rhodesia*. Juta & Co., Ltd., Cape Town & Johannesburg. Abantu Archives, accession AA-WEB-0048.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Identify two categories Bullock uses to describe Shona social and political structure.

CRITICAL QUESTION

How might an administrator's own categories have shaped colonial responses to the 1896 uprising?

Source 8: Fort Haynes and Makoni's Stronghold (1973)

ACCESSION: AA-BK-0254 | TYPE: Regional colonial-era account | AUTHOR: Mashonaland Branch of the Rhodesiana Society

A regional account of the campaign against Chief Makoni in Manicaland, including sketches of his kraal.

Mashonaland Branch of the Rhodesiana Society. 1973. *Fort Haynes and Makoni's Stronghold*. Rhodesiana Society. Abantu Archives, accession AA-BK-0254.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Identify how the campaign against Chief Makoni ended, and who led it.

CRITICAL QUESTION

How does a single-region account add detail that broad national histories leave out?

Source 9: Chishawasha (1974)

ACCESSION: AA-BK-0255 | TYPE: Mission history | AUTHOR: Mashonaland Branch of the Rhodesiana Society

A history of Chishawasha Mission, covering its experience during the 1896 uprising.

Mashonaland Branch of the Rhodesiana Society. 1974. *Chishawasha*. Rhodesiana Society. Abantu Archives, accession AA-BK-0255.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Identify how the mission was affected by the events of 1896.

CRITICAL QUESTION

Why might a mission's own account differ from the accounts given in Sources 1 and 6?

Source 10: NADA: The Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual (1929) ★ NEW

ACCESSION: AA-MAG-0140 | TYPE: Institutional/administrative record | PUBLISHER: Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department

Not an eyewitness source from 1896, but a later administrative record showing how colonial institutions remembered and classified African society and history a generation on — a fitting close to this sequence.

Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department. 1929. *NADA: The Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual*, No. 7. Abantu Archives, accession AA-MAG-0140.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Identify one way this 1929 institutional publication refers back to the events of 1896.

CRITICAL QUESTION

What does it reveal that a colonial administrative department chose to memorialise 1896 in its own annual, over three decades later?

4. Differentiated project deliverables

Track A: Leadership tree chart & report

Draw a large “Leadership Hierarchy Tree” diagram showing the political and spiritual structure of the uprising, Shona and Ndebele.

Requirement: write a report citing Source 1 and Source 4 (use Sources 8–9 for regional detail, Source 2 or 7 for a colonial-era counterpoint).

Track B: Digital map & network analysis

Build an interactive digital map showing resistance strongholds, communication paths, and chiefdom networks.

Requirement: submit a paper citing Source 1, Source 4, and Source 6.

Adult learner & diaspora extension module

Historiographical comparison essay: write a 500-word essay comparing how colonial-era records (Sources 2, 7, 8 & 9) and post-independence historical works (Sources 1 & 6) treat political and spiritual authority during the uprising.

5. Source criticism protocol

Students should identify the author/institution, date, intended audience, purpose, and what the source leaves out. Do not treat later histories, reprints, cataloguing profiles or retrospective studies as eyewitness evidence merely because they discuss an earlier event.

6. Catalogue accessions used

AA-WEB-0054	AA-BK-0261	AA-WEB-0032
AA-WEB-0046	AA-WEB-0081	AA-BK-0208
AA-WEB-0048	AA-BK-0254	AA-BK-0255
AA-MAG-0140		

Editorial note: Catalogue descriptions are finding-aid information. Teachers and researchers should consult the actual item where possible and distinguish the catalogue record from the historical source itself.